6: Taylor E-5 (1930-1937) 1938
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The High Woods

The Caribs' intelligence is in their hands and feet. I suspect their own word for incompetent, mabuku, to mean "without feet"; and, just as the typical Frenchman's ability is best described by that untranslatable word, "débrouillard," so the characteristic virtue of the Carib may be summed up in the word "mainoeuvre." The true Carib is neither a hard nor a quick worker, but he is always able to maneuver his way out of a difficult situation in order to accomplish what he is after. "Where there's a will, there's a way" is a motto which suits him well, and nowhere does he show this better than on the high sea and in the high woods.

The high woods (in patois: les grands bois) are those tracts of virgin forest that still cover much of the island's mountainous interior. They lie, as a rule, well over 500 feet above sea level, and it is in them that the gigantic gommiers, chataigniers (*Sloanea*), cedars, rosewood, and other forest kings reach their full majesty. Here the Caribs come to saw wood for posts, boards, and shingles; to fell and hew the gommier for their canoes; to cut larouman for their basketry; to hunt the agouti, the wild pig, the wood pigeon, and the parrot; to search for wawa (*Rajania cordata* L.), berries, and wild honey; to fish the streams with bait, trap, and poison for mullet, crayfish, and other varieties.

The young shoot or cabbage of the mountain palmiste (*Euterpe montana*) provides a pleasant and wholesome salad. It is true the tree must be felled in order to obtain this, but, when this is done at full moon, the hole becomes the refuge of a species of beetle, the *Calandra palmarum*, whose fat white grub constitutes a culinary delicacy much appreciated locally under the name of ver palmiste. This is the reverse of the process employed in cutting trees for dugouts. These are felled at the new moon in order to prevent the incursion of borer worms and grubs. Certain plants and trees, such as the male papaya, are cut down at certain phases of the moon in order to make them spring up again as female, that is, as fruit-bearing trees. Wild pineapples, sapodillas (*Anacardium occidentale*) are to be found in the woods, as also the fruits of the balata and balata trees (*Orythera balaisiaeum* and *Mimusops riedleana*), of the bois cote (*Tapura guianensis*), courbaril (*Hymenaea courbaril*), and icaque (*Hirtella* sp.).

Wild honey of two sorts is to be found: that known as "vèr" (sour) from the small native stingless bee, or "pen lèlè," which produces the black wax already mentioned, and the "gros mie" from the (probably imported) ordinary bee in a wild state. The Caribs are fond of eating the white grub or larvae (in patois: cousine) of both varieties—usually together with the honey, raw.

Water may be obtained on the heights from the corde de l'eau (*Piscidia*), a species of vine liana which releases, when cut, a pint or so of cool, refreshing sap.